

REVIEWS

Spring Flowers of the Lower Columbia Valley. By CLARA CHAPMAN HILL. Illustrated by Mary Comber Miles. pp. xi + 164. University of Washington Press. 1958. \$3.00.

Certainly one of the most frustrating and interest-stifling experiences of a novice at plant identification is his attempt to name a plant by using the formidable terminology of the keys and descriptions of technical manuals. *Spring Flowers of the Lower Columbia Valley* is the newest of a small number of "easy" manuals which have been designed to accustom the beginner to this terminology and to the technique of using the more detailed and comprehensive manuals of the Pacific Northwest flora.

This small book is not, as its title suggests, a manual of the vernal flora of the lower Columbia River valley. Rather it is a florula of what might more appropriately be called the lower Willamette River valley in the vicinity of Portland, Oregon. It describes, in a simplified manner, about 200 of the more conspicuous herbs and shrubs of the season in that region. Use of technical words in the keys and descriptions is held to a minimum; a number of these terms are introduced by means of illustrative line drawings. Additional terms can be found in the glossary which, however, offers some definitions so oversimplified as to be quite uninformative. Approximately one-third of the species treated are adventive. Unfortunately no trees or ferns are considered, even though these groups often attract much attention from the beginners for whom this book was written. Following the introduction is a key to the genera; in the text the species are arranged under family headings and in some instances there are keys to the species within genera. The text is enlivened by brief but interesting notes on the natural history, uses, and lore of various species. Some of the families are characterized by short descriptions, a few of which are so truncated that they do not adequately distinguish one family from another. For example, the traits of the Saxifragaceae as stated could apply equally to the Crassulaceae for which no diagnosis is given. A problem common to all books which cover only a segment of a flora is the chance of misidentification by a beginner of a plant which appears to "key out" correctly, but is in fact unlisted in the book. Nevertheless, the selection of species considered is good, and few errors should arise providing it is used in the season and the region it is intended to cover.

The format, binding, and price are attractive; the nomenclature is up-to-date and the book seems virtually free of typographical errors. For summer and autumn work its owners should feel confident and experienced enough to graduate to other more technical manuals of broader scope, many of which are listed in a bibliography. However, even after they have gone on to other works, they will want to keep this book on the shelf for the occasional pleasure of leafing through it to savour the 71 superb, full-page line drawings by Mary Comber Miles. Perhaps these are its greatest recommendation.—ROBERT ORNDUFF, Department of Botany, University of California, Berkeley.

Spring Flora of the Dallas-Fort Worth Area [,] *Texas*. By LLOYD H. SHINNERS. v, 514 pp., 11 plates, 2 maps. Published by the author, Southern Methodist University, Box 473, Dallas 5, Texas. 1958. \$4.75 (by mail, \$4.85).

The author of this unusual book has been working since 1945 in an area for which there has never been a complete descriptive flora. It is a particularly interesting area because it centers about the Blackland Prairie which supports a large endemic and near-endemic flora, and because the tension zones lying east and west of the prairies here are complicated and have been little known in detail. The author's apologia explains a little of why this is still not a complete flora; this is worth quoting in some detail because it helps to point up one of the most unusual features of the book, namely the extent to which it is truly a production of the author's own work and thought: